Attachment D: Policy Review Process

The Task Force began meeting in May 2012. This group of higher education and K-12 representatives (see Attachment C: Task Force members) had very thoughtful conversations about how the policy can best support institutions in helping students succeed in college.

The review process, detailed below, included education of the task force education about the issues, initial recommendations from the task force, town hall meetings to solicit feedback, final recommendation and community feedback. This information can also be found on the task force webpage

http://highered.colorado.gov/Academics/Groups/AdmissionTransferReview/default.html.

Task Force Meetings

Friday, May 11, 2012

Friday, June 8, 2012

Friday, July 13, 2012

Friday, August 10, 2012

Friday, September 14, 2012

Friday, October 12, 2012

Friday, November 9, 2012

Wednesday, December 5, 2012

Friday, January 11, 2013

Friday, February 8, 2013

Thursday, March 7, 2013

Friday, March 8, 2013

Friday, August 9, 2013

Friday, October 11, 2013

Task Force Guiding Principles

Colorado's statewide admissions policy must promote access and provide a transparent and inclusive way for all prospective students and affiliated constituents to understand the multiple pathways to postsecondary education. The policy must provide flexibility for all institutions, equity for all students and be based upon data, best practices and alignment with K-12, high school graduation guidelines, statewide remedial education policy and statewide transfer policy.

Presentations and Reports

During the discovery process, the Admission Standards Policy Review Task Force was exposed to several presenters, reports and data elements. Below is a brief list of those presentations and reports.

- Dr. Sonia Brandon, Director of Institutional Research at Colorado Mesa University, prepared an analysis of current admission index and the effect of grade inflation in K12 settings.
- Dr. Beth Bean, Director of Research and Information at the Colorado Department of Higher Education, discussed the types of research the Department of Higher

Education has been conducting, including the 2011 Report on Remedial Education and the 2012 Legislative Report on the Postsecondary Progress and Success of High School Graduates.

- Representatives from institutions who were represented on the Task Force discussed their respective admissions processes.
- Partners from the Colorado Department of Education provided information on the new Colorado Academic Standards; the role of higher education in designing forthcoming state and national assessments; building high school graduation guidelines and understanding the criteria for earning a Postsecondary and Workforce Readiness endorsed diploma; and data on Postsecondary Outcomes of High School Graduates.
- Representatives from ACT and College Board discussed the validity of their assessments and the predictability of college success.
- Representatives from the Partnership for Assessment of Readiness of College and Careers (PARCC, state summative assessment for English, Language Arts and Math, scheduled to replace CSAP in 2014-15) and Smarter Balanced, two national consortia assessment agencies, presented on the new high school assessment developments.

Task Force Initial Policy Recommendation Considerations Summer 2013

Based on the research, data and presentations the task force received, they made the following initial policy revision recommendations. These changes to Colorado's college Admissions Standards Policy were proposed by the Admission and Transfer Policy Review Task Force the summer of 2013.

- 1. The index, created in 1987, would be replaced by a more flexible review of a student's academic background and performance, including the rigor of his or her coursework. The index score does not distinguish between achievement in general high school courses and performance in more advanced work such as higher levels of math or Advanced Placement classes. The recommendation is to incorporate a system to more accurately evaluate student achievement and preparation.
- 2. Colorado has relied upon completion of Higher Education Admissions Requirements, also known as HEAR, to determine whether students are eligible for admission to the state's four-year colleges and universities. This recommendation encourages colleges and universities to be more flexible in considering other means of demonstrating readiness beyond the completion of a particular set of courses by title or time. HEAR requirements could still be used but institutions would also be encouraged to consider other demonstrations of competency, such as completing college classes while in high school, subject-specific test scores or performance in particular courses such as Advanced Placement.
- 3. Students who successfully complete a two-year associate's degree of arts or sciences at an accredited in-state institution would be guaranteed admission to a four-year Colorado college or university. Students would have to meet the receiving institution's minimum

- grade point average and have completed all community college courses with a grade of C- or better. Admission would not guarantee placement in a specific degree program.
- 4. Incorporate new assessments when available. New tests now being developed to replace Colorado's annual CSAP/TCAP exams will be used as one measure of college readiness when available. Colorado will begin administering the tests in 2014-15.

Community Town Hall Meetings

Several town hall meetings were scheduled throughout Colorado. The purpose of these town hall meetings was to discuss the initial proposed recommendations from the task forces with a broad group of stakeholders from the community. At each meeting, there were a variety of participants ranging from parents and community members to professionals in higher education and elected officials. The number of participants ranged from ten to forty at each meeting. A summary report was written about these town hall meetings, please see attachment C.

Town hall meetings:

- Army
- Aurora Public Schools
- BOCES
- CACTE
- CASE
- CASE Executive Director
- CCHE
- CCCS VP of Student Services
- CESDA
- COCEAL
- Colorado Council
- Colorado PTA
- Colorado Springs

- Concurrent Enrollment Advisory Board
- DAG
- Denver Public Schools
- Denver/Littleton
- Department of Higher Education
- Durango
- Education Leadership Council
- Fort Collins
- GEAR UP
- Grand Junction
- Southern Superintendents
- Statewide economic meeting
- Sterling

Community Feedback Common Positive Comments

- Frequent mentions of the positive work in aligning with the Colorado Department of Education (CDE). One meeting had a burst of applause because of the positive outcome of both CDE and CDHE working hand in hand, especially given that the graduation guidelines were being developed at the same time. The reciprocal working relationship could be attributed to the intentional effort to have representatives from K12 (counselor, CDE staff) on both the Task Force and the Advisory Committee for both committees.
- Affirmation, at times a sense of relief in some meetings, around the idea that policy had to align with existing practice.
- Holistic student focus The idea that a student will be looked at with a more holistic
 approach and that institutions can look at a variety of indicators was greeted with
 positive feedback but it also generated a great deal of questions about
 implementation. The consensus was that institutions of higher education would have

more freedom to "look at a lot of things, the GPA, PARCC, rigor of classes." The proposed changes "gives a student more of an opportunity to get into higher education because we are looking at more than one or two things." Other feedback was that this policy will define "what is already happening." But for some, the questions were critical of the proposed policy as it presents "too many options" for students to choose from, will be able to "talk their way in" and then not do well once there. There was also questions about "what to tell parents who are used to getting one number" with the Index.

- Flexibility of new approach Focus on competency demonstration, including HEAR.
- Modernization of outdated practices
- Student-centered

Community Feedback Common Challenges

- At a fundamental level, a question heard several times was "why is there a problem" or "what is broken that needs to be fixed?"
- Though there was some agreement on the elimination of the INDEX, there was pushback on the strong wording of the recommendations, "Eliminate the admissions index." For some there was a fear "now this is loosy goosey." Parents like a clear, short list.
- Incorporate new state assessments when available and validated. Communicating the importance of PARCC balanced with a concern about the "newness" of PARCC. The test itself is "untested."
- Consider the impact of concurrent enrollment with new policy.
- Proposed changes will be a burden on high school counselors and a burden on admissions staff in higher education. Coupled with a fear that these positions are "the first to go" in a tough economy that demands cuts in staff.
- Impact on changes to adult learners need to be considered.
- Communicating changes to first-time college students will be a challenge.
- Costs to rural districts due to changes, e.g., the capacity to offer more courses that provide increased rigor.
- "Freaking out" over creating the new tool that will replace the Index.
- Concern that this will mean less accountability in the admissions process.

The task force took the feedback from the community into consideration and finalized their recommendations. These are listed below.

Admission Standards Draft Policy Recommendations October 2013

1. The index, created in 1987, would be replaced by a more flexible review of a student's academic background and performance, including the rigor of his or her coursework. The index score does not consider the rigor of courses completed. The

- recommendation is to incorporate a system to more accurately evaluate student achievement and preparation.
- 2. Colorado has relied upon completion of Higher Education Admission Requirements, also known as HEAR, to determine whether students are eligible for admission to the state's four-year colleges and universities. Examples of these "seat-time" requirements include four years of English language arts and four years of math. Colleges would like a more flexible review of a student's academic history, such as reviewing a student's transcript to see course selection and completion. This recommendation allows higher education to be more flexible in considering other means of demonstrating readiness beyond the completion of a particular set of courses. The task force recommends considering academic performance indicators, including rigor of coursework, grade point average and assessment score results. Rigor can include quality and quantity of courses completed it is important that students take the most challenging courses available and take such courses through their senior year.
- 3. Students who successfully complete a two-year associate of arts or sciences degree at an accredited in-state institution would be guaranteed admission to a four-year Colorado college or university. Students would have to meet the receiving institution's minimum grade point average and have completed all community college courses with a grade of C- or better. Admission would not guarantee placement in a specific program. Transfer student is defined as an applicant who has successfully completed college-level coursework at another regionally accredited institution after completion of high school or after earning a high school equivalency degree.
- 4. New tests being developed to replace Colorado's annual CSAP/TCAP exams will be used as one measure of college readiness when available. Colorado will begin administering the tests in 2014-15 and anticipates validation of testing procedures by 2016-17. Once validated, Colorado institutions will adopt these tests.

Admission Standards Policy Draft Community Feedback

The feedback received from a community on-line survey on the Admissions Standards Policy draft included feedback from institution Presidents, Vice Presidents/Provosts, Assistant/Associate Vice Presidents/Provosts, Deans, Faculty, Administrators, Students and K-12 administrators and counselors. This survey was distributed to all DHE email list serves, by all task force members to their respective campuses, and through the Colorado Department of Education, Scoop. Responders had until November 1st to complete the survey. A copy of each policy was given to survey respondents. After they read the policy drafts, responders were given three opportunities to voice their opinions about the draft policy by responding to 1) What do you find exciting about the proposed recommendations? 2) What would be challenging about the proposed recommendations? and 3) Other comments.

For the Admission Standards Policy draft survey, under the question what are you excited about, responses focused on K-12 alignment, rigor, flexibility and fairness. Responders were excited to

see the obvious link to K-12 and felt higher education was providing clearer guidelines to K-12 about what it means to be college-ready. They appreciated the multiple pathways to admission and recognized the signal to competency based learning assessment. Several respondents commented on the flexibility of the draft policy for institutions and students. The holistic approach of the policy was also mentioned several times as a good aspect of the policy draft. The increased rigor of the new standards was also mentioned several times as a positive.

The challenges regarding the Admission Standards Policy draft included institution politics, enforcement and communication. The responders were concerned with how institutions would maintain selectivity and the window, how holistic practices would impact their staffing needs, how this new policy would have financial impact and what the changes would entail for data collection. They wondered how this policy was aligning with K-12 policies and how higher education planned to communicate these new standards.

The other comments given by responders about the Admission Standards Policy draft were about transparency of the reporting structure established in the policy, a remark that this was not a policy improvement and that this policy was a good foundation for change in Colorado. Overall the feedback received from the public on the Admission Standards Policy draft was positive and encouraging, we are moving in the correct direction with this policy.